DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 445 451 EC 308 057

AUTHOR Walz, Lynn; Vandercook, Terri; Sauer, John; Nelson, Marilyn; Medwetz, Laura; Thurlow, Martha; McDevitt-Kraljic, Mary

TITLE Dissatisfaction x Vision x First Steps > Resistance: A Summary of Learning from Supporting Inclusive Educational Environments through Systematic Change.

INSTITUTION Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis. Inst. on Community Integration.

SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 2000-05-00
NOTE 27p.; This report was partially supported by "Together We're Better: Inclusive School Communities in Minnesota/Partnerships for Systems Change" by the United States Department of Education.
CONTRACT H086J20010
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Office, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr., SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455; Tel: 612-624-4512; Web site: http://www.ici.umn.edu (available in alternate formats).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cooperative Programs; *Demonstration Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inclusive Schools; Organizational Development; Resistance to Change; *Severe Disabilities; *Systems Approach
IDENTIFIERS Minnesota

ABSTRACT

This monograph presents lessons learned from the five-year (1992-97) project, Together We're Better, a federally funded systems change project focused on inclusion of children with severe disabilities in Minnesota schools and communities. The project identified six focus areas: (1) district partnerships, (2) personnel preparation and development, (3) an inclusion mentorship program, (4) statewide training, (5) family leadership, and (6) development of inclusive education products. Lessons learned are presented in terms of an equation, D x V x F > R, or Dissatisfaction multiplied by Vision multiplied by First Steps must be greater than Resistance to change in order for organizational change to occur. Specific lessons include examination of the organization's current practices and areas of need, drafting a vision, communicating the vision to stakeholders, and identification of specific first steps toward the vision's realization. Appended are an inclusion/exclusion exercise, possible focus group questions, and an action planning worksheet. (Contains 15 references.) (DB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 445 451

Dissatisfaction x Vision x First Steps > Resistance

X X >

A summary of learning from supporting inclusive educational environments through systematic change

Lynn Wilde
Jean Vandercook
Jodi Sauer
Marilyn Nelson
Laurel Mortenson
Martha Ehlers
Mary Ellen Kelley

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Together We're Better
Inclusive School Communities
in Minnesota Partnerships for
Systems Change

Institute on Community Integration (UAP)
The College of Education & Human Development
University of Minnesota

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EC308057

2

Dissatisfaction x Vision x First Steps > Resistance

DVFR

A summary of learning from supporting inclusive educational environments through systematic change

Lynn Walz
Terri Vandercook
John Sauer
Marilyn Nelson
Laura Medwetz
Martha Thurlow
Mary McDevitt-Kraljic

Together We're Better
Inclusive School Communities in Minnesota/Partnerships for Systems Change

Institute on Community Integration (UAP)

The College of Education & Human Development

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Published May, 2000.

This report as well as the research effort was partially supported by *Together We're Better: Inclusive School Communities in Minnesota/Partnerships for Systems Change* (Grant Number #H086J20010) awarded by the United States Department of Education to the Minnesota Department of Education and the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. This document does not necessarily reflect the views of the United States or Minnesota Departments of Education or the University of Minnesota and no official endorsement should be inferred.

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

For additional copies or alternative formats contact —

Publications Office
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota
109 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Dr. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612)624-4512

http://ici.umn.edu (Web)

Contents

1 Introduction

3 Together We're Better Overview

5 Impacting the Change Process: D x V x F > R

15 Conclusion

17 Appendix A

19 Appendix B

23 Appendix C

24 References

Introduction

Imagine schools where all students have equal opportunity to succeed, where every contribution is used by the community to enhance the educational experience for all, and where all members of the school feel accepted, valued, successful, secure, and useful. From 1992–97 the Together We're Better Program (TWB) worked with schools in Minnesota to create inclusive learning environments where all members of the school community participated in decision-making for well-planned change. Program staff worked in partnership with school districts to apply a systemic design to the process of developing inclusive school communities. Building from vision statements, the districts employed a variety of techniques to become more inclusive learning environments. This publication presents the lessons of school reform learned by TWB staff and statewide participants.

The framework of these lessons is a formula for change "D x V x F > R," which was developed by Dannemiller Tyson Associates LLC (1994, used with permission) and based on work done by organization design professionals (Beckhard & Harris, 1987). The formula means: **D**issatisfaction multiplied by **V**ision multiplied by **F**irst Steps must be greater than the current **R**esistance to change within an organization for lasting change to occur.

This report first describes the focus areas of the TWB project. Then D x V x F > R will be defined in more detail. The purpose of this publication is to describe the techniques and strategies used by members of the TWB program to develop the needed strength and momentum to generate and sustain change in participating Minnesota school districts. Each section of this publication concludes with stories from individuals and school communities that were part of the TWB program.

Together We're Better Overview

Together We're Better (TWB) was a collaborative program of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning and the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. It was a five-year systems change grant in the area of severe disabilities funded by the U.S. Department of Education between 1992 and 1997. The mission of TWB is described as follows —

> The inclusion of learners with severe disabilities in general education school communities is an essential part of creating an educational system that positively supports the learning and participation of all students. Together We're Better seeks to bring about that inclusive, positive, supportive educational system in Minnesota. This five-year systems change program draws together general and special educators, students, families, and community members to improve educational opportunities for children and youth in Minnesota. The vision of the program is to develop a single educational system that supports the membership, participation, and learning of all students.

Six focus areas were identified to support progress toward this vision —

1. **District Partnerships**
   Partnerships were established with four Minnesota school districts to build more inclusive school communities through broad systemic change. The lessons learned through these partnerships are the primary focus of this publication.
2. **Personnel Preparation and Development**
   Four studies were conducted to better understand the roles, contributions, and perspectives of general educators, special educators, and paraprofessionals who work in inclusive classrooms. Two program development efforts were pursued and accomplished: (a) required coursework on collaboration and inclusive schooling for the M.Ed. in Teacher Leadership at the University of Minnesota, and (b) collegial/consultation support of the Integrated Teacher Education Program with general and special education faculty at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota.
3. **Inclusion Mentorship Program**
   Thirteen teams from across the state acted as resources to schools and families interested in the development of inclusive school communities. Regional support and assistance were available through these teams in a number of ways, including opportunities for cross-district sharing and networking. These teams were provided support, training, and materials through TWB to strengthen their skills toward developing inclusive school communities and effectively dealing with systemic change.
4. **Statewide Training**
   Together We're Better staff participated in various conferences to provide information to educators and families on the development of inclusive school communities. The staff of TWB contacted other school change initiatives within Minnesota to provide information on incorporating inclusion issues into efforts toward school reform.

5. **Family Leadership**
   Families were included in all components of TWB, including membership on the teams of District Partners and Inclusion Mentors. A needs assessment from the families' perspectives guided training initiatives, informational materials, and networking opportunities with families and advocacy organizations. Six advocacy organizations worked collaboratively with TWB staff to design, distribute, analyze, and respond to a family needs assessment survey.

6. **Inclusive Education Products**
   The program generated printed materials that supported the development of inclusive school communities. The materials included newsletters featuring inclusive school communities, curriculum materials to establish caring classroom communities, monographs highlighting effective strategies toward inclusive communities, brochures to inspire visions of inclusion in schools, and a guide to current print and media resources related to inclusive education.

There were four district partners. Each of the district partners began by establishing a collaborative core planning team. The core planning teams provided leadership and management of efforts toward school change and inclusive school community development. Each district sought membership on its core planning team that was diverse and representative of persons who were interested in the schools. Membership included administrators, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, community members, and students. The core planning teams generally met on a monthly basis to explore new ideas, to learn, to assess progress toward systemic change, and to work to implement various action plans. Although these teams had consistent membership, there were times when additional persons were invited to participate in the teams' work. For example, if an action plan could be strengthened by support from local businesses, local business leaders were invited to join the core planning team. Likewise, there were times when the team members met to work in small groups. These task forces allowed concentrated effort devoted to the completion of specific tasks.

Impacting the Change Process: D x V x F > R

According to the work of Jacobs (1994) and Beckhard and Harris (1987) in organizational development, there is always **resistance to change**. Three things must be present for an organization to generate the momentum to overcome this resistance —

Dissatisfaction — An honest examination and delineation of expectations and needs that are not now being met.

Vision — An image of a preferred future.

First Steps —The actions needed to begin moving toward the preferred future.

The formula for overcoming resistance can then be written as Dissatisfaction multiplied by Vision multiplied by First Steps is greater than Resistance (DxVxF>R) for organizational change to occur (Dannemiller Tyson Associates, LLC, 1994). If any of these three components is "zero" it will not be possible to overcome the resistance to change. This means if individuals in the system do not feel a sense of dissatisfaction, or the organization has not articulated a preferred future for itself, or the participants do not possess the knowledge, skills, or attitudes necessary to move from the current reality to the preferred future, it will be virtually impossible to overcome the natural resistance. The organization will not have the energy necessary to create lasting organizational change.

The purpose of change agents, therefore, is to cultivate the energy needed to overcome resistance to change by supporting the recognition of dissatisfaction, the articulation of a preferred future, and the initiation and support of action to move toward the preferred future. This is done by attending to the following —

- **Dissatisfaction** requires the initiation of a **Common Database**, allowing everyone in the organization access to information pertaining to district status on current issues. Commonly, information is not shared with the whole community, either purposefully or because it is not seen as important to the members of the community.
- **Vision** requires **Strategic Information**, new learning and direction shared by the leadership or visionary team and opportunities for all members to respond with ideas or practices for realizing the preferred future.
- **First Steps** require **Aligned Action**, specific action that leads the organization from the present reality to the preferred future. These actions must align past capacities with preferred future activities, align the actions of all in the organization with each other to work together toward a common goal, and align actual practice with the ideals or philosophies of the preferred future.

The TWB program has learned a great deal in attending to the change components of dissatisfaction, vision, and First Steps. On the following pages we describe some of the methods, strategies, and activities that have had the greatest positive impact on the change process in the districts with which TWB established partnerships.

Cultivating *Dissatisfaction:* Creating a Common Database of the Current Reality

Cultivating dissatisfaction is not the creation of frustration or disillusionment, but the acknowledgment of unhappiness already present in an organization. Cultivating dissatisfaction is an intervention for improvement that should neither discredit past accomplishments nor place blame on prior actions. To cultivate dissatisfaction, information is gathered and shared with all the participants of the organization. Data may be collected from within and outside the organization through surveys, statistical analysis, expert opinion, and anecdotal reporting from various perspectives. This common database continues to grow as the organization continues to formulate a vision, begins taking action steps, and continues implementing change. An important step in creating a common database is the development of a "needs statement," or strategic direction, that has been agreed upon by the community, or at least by a leadership team. Acknowledgment of dissatisfaction in an organization includes —

- investigating the topics of concern,
- pinpointing the suspected area of need for change,
- gathering data to identify current status, and
- including input from all stakeholders of the organization.

Investigating the Topic

As well as collecting information related to the topic of interest or concern (e.g., inclusive education), investigating the topic means identifying the topic in relationship to the particular school. Each TWB district partner began by forming a core planning team to lead the district's inclusion efforts. As the core planning teams began, two activities were used to investigate the topic of inclusion. The first was to explore definitions of inclusion. Through this activity the core planning team members read and discussed professional articles describing inclusion for students with disabilities. Some teams also reviewed the history of education for students with disabilities. The other activity was an inclusion/exclusion exercise (Appendix A), where participants reflected on what it means to be included or excluded. Through these activities, group members learned more about inclusive practices and took time for personal and group reflection. Members were then able to discuss proposed practices of inclusion with greater understanding.

Pinpointing the Suspected Area of Need

As the core planning team would informally pinpoint a suspected area of need, they worked to gather information that accurately described the need. Pinpointing the need is essential before determining the method of investigation, sources for data, and time needed to gather the information. For example, when the core planning team had an agreed-upon concept of inclusion, they began to discuss specific indicators of an inclusive school. What data might be an indicator of students and adults being included in the school community? The immediate response to this question related to students with disabilities is, "Are students with disabilities physically present with students without disabilities?" In all districts, it was soon determined that physical proximity was a vehicle for inclusion not an indicator, and that there were

other students and adults who should be considered when determining the current status of inclusion in the district.

Gathering Information

Knowing as much about the district as possible enhances the acknowledgment and understanding of dissatisfaction. The core planning teams continued to clarify the current reality of the schools by using common tools and research techniques, such as —

- Describing current practices.
- Conducting surveys.
- Analyzing issues.
- Conducting focus groups.
- Identifying local, state and national trends.

These activities involved all stakeholders, including teachers, support staff, students, parents, and community members. All core planning team members contributed information about the current status of the district. Together they developed a plan to share information about the current status of the district with other district staff.

Including Stakeholder Input

It is important to involve all persons or groups who have vested interests in the school district. Acknowledging the dissatisfaction in an organization must incorporate many viewpoints to gain understanding of an area of interest and support the vision and resulting actions. As an example, teachers will not know the impact of homework on families of second-graders without input from parents. A community will not understand the result of work hours on student achievement without hearing from both students and teachers. Coaches will not perceive personal bias in team selection unless revealed by students on and off the teams. Administrators will not understand the multiple and oftentimes conflicting concerns surrounding inclusive education without input from the teachers, parents, and students who are associated with both general and special education. Stakeholder input is a vital component of cultivating dissatisfaction through creating a common database.

Illustration

"If it isn't broken, why fix it?" This platitude makes sense to people who do not believe change is necessary. A system that is already known, even if flawed, can feel very comfortable to some people and they will try to maintain it. But maintaining the status quo within an organization often deceives people into believing that all is well.

One of the district partners had been on a journey to develop inclusive school communities for many years. Inclusion began in this district because of parent demands. As a district, it struggled to learn what inclusion means to children with disabilities and their families. This story begins shortly after those struggles. The district was at a "comfortable" resting spot at the time TWB began working with it. It had made tremendous changes in the way students with disabilities received needed supports and services. As a whole, the district was exemplary in its practices and methods of educating students with disabilities within the context of general education classrooms, and it recognized this exemplary status. Still, the leaders of inclusive education within the district sensed a need to partner with the TWB staff to bolster its efforts for inclusion.

The core planning team in this district held many meetings. Typically, a couple of needs were identified in these meetings, such as how to include students who were academically "gifted" more fully into the general education classroom, or how to support students with academic demands who were not labeled as needing special education services. Yet every meeting ended with a lack of enthusiasm for action. The TWB coordinators working with the district believed that this general lack of enthusiasm from action stemmed from the fact that basically, district staff were satisfied with

their accomplishments related to inclusive education and were not seeing a great need for additional effort in this area. Because of this, TWB staff were considering an end to this partnership.

During the previous school year, the district had conducted a large-scale employee opinion survey to gauge the satisfaction of district members on a number of systemic issues. The survey was extensive in its inquiry, but most district stakeholders did not find the results compelled them toward action. A review of the results revealed that the district was operating under a tremendous misconception. The core planning team reported that the district believed all was well in the area of inclusion; the survey indicated that many in the district were dissatisfied with inclusion. Only 33% of the employees agreed with the statement, "Inclusion has a positive impact on the quality of education." Of that 33%, only 5% agreed strongly. Discovering this critical fact helped the team to recognize a district-wide "Dissatisfaction" and a need for change. What resulted was a district-wide participatory process for systemic reform in the area of inclusive education.

The Director of Special Services from this district partner commented on their learning —

> I can remember in a vivid and sometimes painful manner when inclusive education was something that we implemented because of parental pressure and the threat of litigation. What a dramatic and positive change to think that we are now making educational decisions based on our vision, values, and knowledge of what is best for kids, rather than what is most convenient or what has been past practice. And to think that this inclusive perspective now extends to other students representing diversity in our population (gifted students, limited English proficient students, etc.) is most gratifying. The Systems Change Project (TWB) has helped us develop this perspective on a district-wide basis.

Vision: Using Strategic Information to See New Options

"Vision" is seeing what is not there, but could be. Vision provides passion for the change process. Although change can emerge from a series of problem-solving actions, lasting and far-reaching change comes from imagining a preferred future (Lippitt, 1983). Based on input and perspectives from all stakeholders, vision is an ever-growing image of what an organization can become. Although a preferred future vision is developed by many constituents, it is often introduced or described by a leadership or visionary team.

Creating a vision in an organization includes —

- Exposure to strategic information from experts in the field.
- Discovering the vision, mission, and values statements for the organization.
- Communicating the vision with those in the organization.
- Identifying long-range goals that will lead to the vision becoming reality.

Exposure to Strategic Information

Those developing a vision first need information that can expand their thinking beyond their knowledge and experience. This information supports movement from the current reality to a preferred future. They can gather strategic information from research, theory books, videotapes, presentations by those field-testing alternatives, visits to other educational units, dialogue with people within the system who have different experiences and areas of knowledge, and so forth. Acquiring new learning allows participants to create a vision that is beyond their current experiences.

The expert information is used with the inside view of the organization to create a vision. Once the participants have sought

strategic information, they begin to develop a specific vision for the organization. The mission of the organization, and definitions of values and beliefs held by the organization, must be clear because they act as a foundation for the vision. In a school district, the vision may begin as a district-wide plan, or may develop by combining change efforts from various buildings. In any case, the strongest visions have both a district-wide focus and a building-level interpretation. Organizational vision development includes input from the full array of stakeholders (i.e., parents, students, teachers and all persons who have an interest in the organization's processes and outcomes).

Perhaps the first activity is to allow different members to express their personal visions for the organization. This information is expanded or becomes more detailed by visiting other schools; reading professional books, journals, or research articles; hearing speakers present on specific approaches or techniques; and forming learning or dialogue groups on topics related to vision creation or clarification.

There are a few specific strategies that TWB staff and district partners found to be helpful when sharing information with school members —

- Allow all members who have a vision for the future to share their visions so that all points of view are expressed and might contribute to the delineation of a shared vision.
- When visiting other buildings that are examples of part or all of the developing vision, ask the building personnel to share their success and to identify clearly the barriers they had to overcome in achieving their current program.
- Books, journal articles, and research are easiest to assimilate into the vision through brief summaries or short presentations; few educators have the time or desire to read actual research while teaching.
- Revising the key questions used in the MAPS process (Forest & Pearpoint, 1992) and using individual and group reflections can begin the dialogue necessary to create a the vision of a preferred future. The illustration at the end of this section will provide more specific information regarding this approach.
- The videotapes *The Power of Vision* (1990) and/or *The Business of Paradigms* (1989) can be useful resources for core planning teams in realizing the empowerment of determining a preferred future and being willing to challenge and expand upon current practice.

Discovering the Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision, mission, and values evolve through repeated discussion and personal reflections, which are then shared with the large group. Even when key concepts are defined, team members will have different understandings of the terms central to its vision. It is important to continue to discuss the meaning of key concepts. Encouraging members to publicly give examples of how inclusion is working effectively is one way to encourage discussion and dialogue.

A vision must include the perspectives of the full array of stakeholders to be effective. One way to identify the perspectives of stakeholders is by convening focus groups. One of the TWB district partners trained high school students to conduct focus group interviews. Input was then gained from a large number of high school students.

Other methods that were used to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders in the development of a shared vision were the use of planning strategies such as PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) (Pearpoint, O'Brien, & Forest, 1993) and MAPS (McGill Action Planning System) for organizations (Vandercook, York, & Forest, 1989). The MAPS questions that are typically used in designing a plan of support for individual students to be

included in school communities were used with groups of educators, students, and parents throughout the district. Again, the illustration at the end of this section details more specifically how this approach was utilized.

Regardless of the vision development activities that are employed, it is important to clarify the purpose for vision creation and the reason why each person's input is a valuable part of the process. A vision statement is created to reflect the passion of the group toward the preferred future. Even core planning team members can lose sight of a "purpose" within an array of competing activities. Aligning a vision for inclusion with existing district visions for the future strengthens the lasting power of systemic change.

Communicating the Vision

To promote a full base of support for the vision, it is essential to communicate the vision to many people, in various settings, with a variety of examples through the media and other presentation formats. Communicating the vision helps create a groundswell within the organization. Ultimately all members of the organization need to understand the vision and their part in making the vision happen. As this understanding increases, so does ownership of the vision. The organizational members have increased personal commitment to the vision as they share it with others and feel increasingly accountable for accomplishing the vision. Increased ownership, commitment, and accountability contribute to a positive expectation of vision attainment.

Sharing the vision with many stakeholders not only expands understanding of the vision to a wider audience, it increases personal commitment to the plan. When district members publicly describe effective inclusion practices to school staff, they increase personal understanding and ownership of the ideals of inclusion. Mutual involvement in sharing the vision results in clarity of purpose. In TWB districts, core planning teams communicated the vision to others in the district through the use of building representatives. Most of the district partners had one or more staff persons from each building in the district on the core planning team for the purpose of communicating to the building staff the progress of the core planning team.

Identifying Long-Range Goals

After considerable work with vision and values, district partners began to consider and identify the specific focus of initial actions toward improvement in creating more inclusive learning environments. At this point it was critical to match the specific actions toward inclusion with district leaders'/administrators' perspective of district-wide goals. As the vision for inclusive schools is aligned with district-wide long-range goals there is more strength toward realizing the vision. When the vision is in sync with long-range district goals, it will also be connected to district support and resources.

Illustration

Creating a vision of the desired future is a critical step in systemic change. When beginning, it is important to communicate a powerful message of valuing individual visions in order to develop a collective picture of what the school community wants to create. In order to create a collective vision, all school community members are encouraged and supported to participate in the process. This participatory approach creates the excitement, alignment, and support needed by each district member to strive toward the vision that has been developed.

One district partner designed a process that ensured the participation of all school community members (students, teachers, administration, parents, etc.). The process was adapted from the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS). MAPS is traditionally used to design individual educational programs based on a vision for a student. MAPS is a participatory process — all of the significant people in the student's life (e.g., parents, friends, special

educator, classroom teacher) are led through a set of questions that lead the group from vision to the development of a plan (Forest, & Lusthaus, 1990; Vandercook, York, Forest, 1989).

The core planning team in this district organized focus group activities in each school building, the district office, Parent/Teacher Organization meetings, and classrooms. Team members facilitated the process in pairs. One person facilitated the group through a set of questions, while the other person recorded what people said. This arrangement supported effective facilitation. When the group was large, one person facilitated the questions and then participants were given time to record their responses on large chart paper. In this situation, the second facilitator helped answer questions in the group.

The focus group activity was divided into two sessions. The first session asked participants to personalize the concept of inclusion and reflect on what it meant for their school community (See Appendix B, *Focus Group Questions, Part I*). Using the questions from the MAPS process as a framework, the focus group then generated ideas for a vision of a school community where all members were welcomed, valued, and included. (See Appendix B, *Focus Group Questions*). Responses to focus group questions were summarized and, based on this input from all the focus groups, the core planning team articulated a district-wide vision and supporting values for inclusive education. In a follow-up focus group session, participants identified capacities and barriers within the system related to attainment of their collective vision. (See Appendix B, *Focus Group Questions, Part II*). These would be used to identify goals and establish action groups to insure continued effort toward realization of the vision. By having focus group activities based on MAPS, this district was able to create a vision statement with broad-based support among many individuals within the school community. (See Appendix B, *Focus Group Questions*).

First Steps: Implementing Processes to Move From the Current Reality to the Preferred Future

First Steps require deciding on and taking the actions needed to begin moving from the current reality toward the preferred future. They include identifying knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to begin and sustain change. Goals are developed, then activities or events that will help the organization meet those goals are identified, planned, implemented, and evaluated. Also included in First Steps is identifying people within the organization to lead the implementation activities.

First Steps require alignment to be effective. The past must be aligned with the future; organizational structure must be aligned to relationships supportive of the preferred future; policies must be aligned to represent desired classroom, building, and community practices; practices must be aligned to a philosophical framework supporting the desired future; and actions must be aligned to vision and values.

Initiating First Steps in an organization includes —

- Realizing the need for leadership in the process of change.
- Building trust among the organizational members.
- Empowering members to make their best contribution.
- Articulating and implementing action plans to begin movement toward the preferred future.

Recognizing the Need for Leadership

Leadership is particularly important during First Steps. Conflict often occurs as individuals attempt to agree upon proposed practices that align with the stated vision. These conflicts need not derail the change process. The leadership's commitment to the vision must be obvious to all participants. It is also extremely important that individuals continue to feel secure in expressing their perspectives as well as their needs for support as they work together to implement actions aligned with the preferred future.

Communication with district administration is vital to maintaining change efforts. It is also critical to identify action team leaders and liaisons between action teams and district administration. Action team leadership for the TWB initiatives was provided at least in part by the core planning team members in each district.

Core planning team leaders along with building administrators should plan carefully how to maintain change and sustain action teams over the first few years of implementation. Leaders must be prepared for meetings with action teams and administration. The action team leader will need definitions or a rationale for the project (a clear understanding of the vision), the leader also needs to know how to keep a team on track toward its goals. There may be a need for leadership training; TWB used *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey (1989) and information about effective teaming by Joiner Associates (1988) as the basis for leadership training.

Building Trust

Trust begins when people see each other as trustworthy. Using ice-breakers, allowing time for networking before and after meetings, and celebrating growth are activities that break down walls between people and build trust. Creating a group that learns from everyone and values risk-taking builds trust among members.

Together We're Better learned some valuable lessons for building trust. The first is that building trust is a slow process. Members must spend time together before they can work together effectively. Frequent and regular meetings were held even during release time from school (e.g., summer break) to promote trust. A second lesson is the confirmation of Covey's (1989) habit, "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood." When team members practiced and integrated this habit into their meetings, better decisions were made and motivation was enhanced. A third is to delay activities that involve risk-taking, or that might be threatening until after trust has been established. All of these imply that the process of building trust takes time and patience.

Empowering Individuals

Empowerment is a key to continued momentum toward realizing the vision. As individuals assume leadership roles and take action toward goal attainment, they are energized to keep working for their vision. Some strategies TWB found to be helpful in empowering others are —

- Rotate team facilitation among all members.
- Set the agenda for the next meeting at the close of the current meeting.
- Continually ask the question, "What will it take to maintain this project after the grant support is gone?"
- Break the large group into smaller working or discussion groups that report back to the large group.
- Recognize contributions made by individual members and results gained by the team.

During a meeting, it is helpful to provide facilitators with materials that will assist them in being successful. Have a recorder write notes on easel pads during discussions or when finalizing agreements. Both of these strategies increased participation by all members. Fre-

quently assign members to small groups to work, and then report back to the large group. Prompt team members to keep thinking about what it will take to maintain lasting change. Provide new information to working teams in brief summaries or short presentations.

In the districts with which TWB worked, one of the most critical needs identified was the need for collaborative planning time. Therefore, often an important first step was to identify ways to gain collaborative planning time for teaching teams to work together to better implement inclusive education. Collaborative planning time is a critical element of developing inclusive schools, but it is often difficult to coordinate planning time for school staff. Because collaborative planning time is so critical to effective inclusion, the commitment to this planning time will set a dramatic tone of support for inclusive education.

Implementing Action Plans

The expected result of First Steps is action plans. Action plans (see Appendix C, *Action Planning Worksheet*) move individuals and the whole team toward making their vision a reality. Specific actions are centered on specific goals. When generating goals, include the following —

- A clear statement of the desired outcome.
- Who the responsible person(s) will be.
- What timeline is expected.
- How the goal will be evaluated.

As much as possible all actions and activities should be made explicit. For example, as an action team is formed, talk about the desired outcomes of the group's efforts. Action teams may require or desire the involvement of persons outside of the leadership or planning team. Such stakeholders might include special educators, classroom teachers, teachers from different grade levels, teachers of different subjects, parents, students, business members, principals, school board members, and central administrators. Involvement on action teams is a way to expand involvement and ownership by an ever-widening range of stakeholders. For example, a particular person may have knowledge, skill, or access that will strengthen efforts toward goal completion, or the viewpoint of another stakeholder group may be critical to long-lasting goal attainment.

As described previously, TWB began in the partner districts by establishing core planning teams comprised of a variety of stakeholders. Generally, the core planning team included a representative from each building in the district. As the vision development gave way to action planning, the composition of the action teams was extended to others who were not on the core planning team. This expansion of involvement also contributed to expanded ownership of the vision.

Orientation to the vision and beliefs of the team, and training in action planning or collaborative teamwork, is needed for leaders of the action teams. During the first few months (especially if the teams meet on a monthly basis), the primary activities of the action team will be planning. It is a frustrating experience for teachers who want to move right into action. This frustration can be eased somewhat if there is a structure in place for long-range planning in the district (such as a clearly communicated five-year district plan) and/or leadership support of strategic planning is communicated in a variety of ways (such as funds for projects, verbal comments about the "big picture," sharing of information related to the specific area addressed by the team's goals). It is critical to address how to ensure that adequate planning and goal setting takes place in districts that do not have this type of structural and leadership support in place.

There are almost always complications that make it difficult to implement a project as planned. The action team must recognize this and move forward. It should continually revisit the mission, vision, and values as the team revises plans. This will energize the team, keep it focused on action plans, and

maintain alignment. If a team becomes stuck by an unanticipated complication, or when progress toward a goal is slow it helps to have concrete examples of work successfully completed by others (an example of a product from one district, spurs thoughts about what to do in other districts).

Illustration

One district partner had a well-developed and articulated district vision for inclusion before TWB staff began working with the district. The district had an Education Plan that involved using teacher teams to better meet the diverse needs of *all* learners. When joining TWB, this district's core planning team looked for ways to support its Education Plan for inclusive learning. The core planning team set goals to —

- Gather information and raise awareness about the district's vision for inclusion.
- Assist staff in evaluating how well the district was meeting the goals of the vision.
- Support efforts to strengthen instructional teams as a delivery model, especially in the new elementary school that was being constructed.

The new elementary school was scheduled for opening in the fall of 1995 with a principal and staff committed to inclusion and collaborative teaming. The school's staff participated in two days of training during the summer to focus on creating effective teaching teams. This training was provided by TWB and district core planning team members. Together teachers and principal grappled with —

- Defining and implementing their own visions within the school and district visions.
- Building and strengthening relationships among team members.
- Working effectively together (tools for communication, meetings, etc.).
- Defining individual roles, responsibilities, and procedures.

Training was designed to first present an idea, then provide time for each teaching team to apply and modify the information to fit their needs. The staff of this elementary school used the opportunity to learn and plan together well and used much of what they learned during their first year as a school community. They created a school with multi-age "family clusters" of 110-150 students and 7-8 adults (Vandercook, Nelson, Montie, & Bratts, 1998). Norms included flexible grouping and service delivery within the family cluster. Collaboration and planning were key to success. Staff attributed some of that success to the strategies and tools addressed in summer training with TWB staff, and asked for further support during staff development and planning days.

The staff of this elementary school made some important First Steps in meeting their vision for an inclusive school community. Members of the core planning team for the district also see successes at this elementary school as important First Steps for the district as a whole. Other schools in the district may learn from and be encouraged by the example of this school as they work to realize their own visions for meeting the needs of *all* learners.

Conclusion

Every effort for change is met with "Resistance" (R), therefore, it is necessary to cultivate energy to overcome this resistance. Through working with school district partners, some techniques and strategies to cultivate this energy were identified by TWB staff.

One avenue for cultivating energy to overcome the resistance to change is found within the organization. What is the current status of the organization? What current realities that have evolved from past practices do not demonstrate maximum effectiveness in the organization? This examination will cultivate "Dissatisfaction" or the "D" in the formula for change. Wanting to improve upon current practice begins to generate the energy needed for change.

Looking beyond what is to what could be is the beginning of "Vision" or "V" in the formula. Vision is generated by investigating theories, viewing practices of others, or simply identifying the imaginations and hopes of organization stakeholders. A vision has increased power or energy when many people understand the potential results of the new view. Creating energy through vision has two components: 1) drafting the vision, and 2) communicating the vision to many stakeholders.

Lastly, an organization must identify, on a systemic and individual member level, what "First Steps" (F) will result in moving the organization from the current reality to the preferred future of the vision. This third source of energy to overcome the resistance to change is practical. Actions that are expected to increase effectiveness and improve results are identified and initiated. When people work together toward a common goal, energy will increase and change can occur. To quote Margaret Mead, the great anthropologist of the 20th century, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" (Petras, K., Petras, R., 1995).

Appendix A

An Inclusion / Exclusion Exercise

1. Ask participants to refer to the handout (see page 18) while you place a copy on the overhead projector. Explain that the purpose of this activity is to define what **inclusion** and **exclusion** mean and what this has to do with learning in schools.

2. Ask each person to think about what it means to them, personally, to be included. Suggest that each person thinks of a community in which they are **included** (e.g. family, close friends, coworkers, community group) then list words that describe what this means, how it feels, and how it impact their behavior. Ask that they do the same for being **excluded**.

   Allow about 10 minutes for thought and discussion within small groups. Ask participants to be prepared to share their thoughts and words with the large group.

3. Ask participants to share their descriptors while you listen and record them on the transparency or poster paper. After **inclusion** and **exclusion** descriptors are recorded, ask participants —

   "If included, how do you act?"

   "If excluded, how would you act?"

   Frequently participants will state aggressive, withdrawn, suicidal. Record these.

4. Ask participants to think about the "type" of kids who are getting referred to special education at an alarming rate.

   Often they will identify EBD (emotionally behaviorally disordered).

5. Then ask —

   "What do these lists have to do with learning?"

   Usually, participants respond with no prompting that coming from a place of being and feeling included, children can be more open to learn. They will be more willing to take risks themselves. Coming from a place of exclusion or rejection, children are less able to learn because part of their being is focused on protecting from further rejection.

6. As a final point of discussion, ask —

   "If a child spends her entire day with her fifth grade peers, is she experiencing inclusion?"

   Make the point that although physical presence in a school community is a necessary prerequisite to inclusion, it is not sufficient. Inclusion is experiencing a sense of value, belonging, and support to actively participate and learn in the fifth grade classroom.

Inclusion	Exclusion

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

Part I: Identifying Vision and Values of a School Community Where All Members are Welcomed, Valued, and Included

A. Reflect on you personal experience of being welcomed, valued, and included as a member of a group or community —
   - What did it mean?
   - How did it feel?
   - How did you act?

B. Why is this important to your school community?
   - What beliefs or values do you hold about people, learning, or community, that makes it important that all members are welcomed, valued, and included?
   - Based on you beliefs or values, what standards of behavior do you want to model, develop, or teach in your school community?

C. Reflect on your personal experience of not being welcomed, valued, or included as a member of a group or community —
   - What did it mean?
   - How did it feel?
   - How did you act?
   - Who is this school community is not welcomed, valued, or included? How and why are they excluded?
   - What are the consequences for your school community?

D. Reflect on your vision for the future. In looking forward over the next five years, visualize your dream for a community where all members are welcomed, valued, and included. Being as specific as possible answer the following questions.
   - How would community members act?
   - How would previously excluded community members be included?
   - How would the community look or behave differently overall?
   - How would school organization, structure, policies, or processes look in a school community that is welcoming, valuing, and inclusive of all students and adults?
   - How would the culture of the school community be different?

Part II: Identifying Barriers, Needs, and Strengths in Relation to Our Vision of a School Community Where All Members are Welcomed, Valued, and Included — Activities for Adults Concerned About the School

Note: Refer to the district vision and values statements as a reference point for considering barriers, needs, and strengths.

A. Barriers

Think about the barriers that prevent or inhibit you from achieving our vision for a school community where all members are welcomed, valued, and included.

- How do the beliefs, values, or behavior of community members act as a barrier?
- How does school organization, structure, policy, or practice act as a barrier?
- What other barriers to inclusion exist in your school community?

B. Needs

Think about what you must do in order to realize our vision of a school community where all members are welcomed, valued, and included.

- What needs exist related to members of the school community?
- What needs exist related to school organization, structure, policy, or practice?
- What other needs must be met to realize our vision?

C. Strengths

Think about the strengths and assets of your school community.

- What strengths or assets exist that would support movement toward our vision of a school community where all members are welcomed, valued, and included?
- How can these strengths or assets be used as a helping force towards our vision (strategies, ideas, etc.)?

D. Prioritization of Barriers

Review the list of barriers identified by this group. Identify and rank order the top five barriers.

Part III: Identifying Barriers, Needs, and Strengths in Relation to Our Vision of a School Community Where All Members are Welcomed, Valued, and Included — Activities for Students

Note: Discuss the district vision and values statements as a reference point for considering barriers, needs, and strengths.

A. Barriers

What things, actions, or feelings act as a barrier from making others feel welcomed, valued, and included in our school?

B. Needs

What needs do we have in our school to make others feel welcomed, valued, and included?

C. Strengths

What are the strengths in our schools to make others feel welcome?

D. Strategies to Overcome Barriers

How can we use there to help make others feel welcomed?

Appendix C

Action Planning Worksheet

Review date_____

Co-chairs of this action team_____

Action team members_____

Strategic area

Goal # (Write a measurable goal that is **SMART** meaning specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and tangible.)

Action steps	**Timeframe** (begin/end dates)	**Person(s) responsible**	**Resources** (money, staff, etc.)	**Performance standard: Criteria for accomplishment**

References

Beckhard, R., Harris, R. T. (1987). Resistance management. *Organizational transitions: Managing complex change* (2nd ed., pp 89-100). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Barker, J. (Author), Damlo, P. (Editor and Coordinator), Mitchell, J. (Layout and Design) (1990). *The power of vision* [Video]. 221 River Ridge Circle, Burnsville, MN 55337: Charthouse International Learning Corporation.

Barker, J.A. (Producer) (1989). *The business of paradigm* [video]. 221 River Ridge Circle, Burnsville, MN 55447: Charthouse International Learning Corporation.

Covey, S. R. (1989). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. New York: Fireside, Simon & Schuster.

Dannemiller Ty on Associates, LLC, (1994). *Real time strategic change: A consultant guide to large-scale meetings*. Ann Arbor, MI: Dannemiller Tyson Associates, Inc.

Forest, M., Lusthaus, E. (1990). Everyone belongs with the MAPS action planning system. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 22* (2), 32-35.

Forest M., & Pearpoint, J.C. (1992). Putting all kids on the MAP. *Educational Leadership, 50* (2), 26-31.

Glover, J.A., Bruning R.H. (1987). *Educational psychology: Principles and applications*, chapters 2, 3, and 4. Boston, MA: Little Brown and Company.

Jacobs, R.W. (1994). *Real time strategic change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Lippitt, R. (1983). Future before you plan. In R. A. Ritvo & A. G. Sargent (Eds.), *The large group: Dynamics and therapy*. London: Constable.

Scholtes, P.R. et.al. (1988). *The team handbook*. Madison, WI: Joiner Associates Inc.

Pearpoint, J., O'Brien, J., Forest, M. (1993). *Planning alternative tomorrow's with hope, a workbook for planning better futures*. Toronto, Ontario: Center for Integrated Education and Community.

Petras, K., Petras, R. (Eds.). (1995). *The whole world book of quotations: Wisdom from women and men around the globe throughout the centuries*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Vandercook, T., Nelson, M., Montie, J., Bratts, B. (1998). A school dedicated to inclusion. *Principal, 77* (3), 37-39.

Vandercook, T., York, J., Forest, M. (1989). The McGill Action Planning System (MAPS): A strategy for building the vision. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 14* (3), 205-215.

Other *Together We're Better* Publications. . .

Weaving Tapestries of Inclusion: Seven Threads to Strengthen School Membership

A Preferred Future Worksheet: A Process for School Teams

Hey, We See It Differently!

Lessons for Understanding: An Elementary School Curriculum on Perspective Taking

Lessons for Understanding: A Junior High and High School Curriculum on Perspective Taking

Teacher Efficacy in Heterogeneous Fifth- and Sixth-grade Classrooms

For cost and ordering information, contact the Publications Office, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 612 624-4512, 612 624-9344 (fax), or http://ici.umn.edu (Web).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE